

Johnny Warren, with Andy Harper and Josh Whittington, *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofers: An Incomplete Biography of Johnny Warren and Soccer in Australia*, Random House Australia, Sydney, 2002, pp. xxvi + 348, \$24.95 (paperback).

Johnny Warren was a star soccer player of the 1960s and early 1970s. He captained Australia. He was also a member of the team, which competed in the 1974 World Cup in West Germany. He has worked in and around soccer in many capacities – as a coach, liaison man/entrepreneur, journalist and broadcaster. For approximately two decades he has been associated with SBS, and together with his friend and colleague Les Murray, has provided us with valuable information and commentary on various players, clubs and competitions, both here and overseas. Johnny Warren is a champion of attacking, skilful play, specially the Brazilian game.

In his introduction Warren laments that soccer, the world game, the beautiful game, has not been afforded, what he regards, as its proper place in Australian sport. He used, and stresses that he insisted on, the title *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofsters* because of the negative responses he and his soccer ilk received from Anglo – Australians in the 1960s. It is, as if, he cannot forget, and more importantly doesn't want to forget, the slights of yesteryear. He has since received a number of awards – a Member of the British Empire and an inductee of the Bicentennial Sporting Hall of Fame. Should he forget? Should he have moved on and provided different emphases in his account of his life in Australian soccer? In the introduction Warren states:

To the extent that soccer has cruelled itself by very poor administration I also wonder why more public scrutiny hasn't been placed on the sport. Why hasn't it been in the public and national interest to make the sport accountable? (p. xxv).

Two responses will be provided here. First, why should public resources be devoted to ensuring that soccer becomes a dominant and successful sport? Other professional team sports have found administrators who have been able to respond to the myriad of problems associated with the management and operation of sporting competitions. Why should soccer receive special treatment? Should it not put its own house in order? Second, where there have been public inquiries Warren virtually ignores them. In 1995 the Australian Senate published the Stewart Report and two additional reports on Australian soccer.¹ The Stewart Report was an in-house inquiry by Australian Soccer over allegations concerning corruption associated with the administration of the sport and soccer's transfer and compensation system. The report was published in the Senate to provide it with parliamentary privilege, because of fears that persons criticised by Mr Stewart would sue Soccer Australia for defamation. Warren devotes all of one paragraph to the Stewart Report, and the two additional Senate reports. He tells his readers that they occurred (p. 298). He does not engage with any of the issues raised in the respective reports – especially those of Mr Stewart, which went to the heart of problems associated with the administration of Australian soccer.

Warren also says in his introduction that *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofsters* 'is a story of discrimination against the game and the individuals in it' (p. xiv). Well, it is not. It is simply an account of Warren's involvement with the sport. He provides details of his career as a player, starting as a schoolboy, through various clubs he played with, through to his time as an Australian representative. His method is to provide details of various games, with tit-bits thrown in concerning other players and events, which occurred off the field. He also provides various comments on various coaches and administrators who have been involved with

Australian soccer. Material is presented concerning his coaching days and other soccer functions he has performed. In addition, he examines Australia's performance at various Olympic Games and, more significantly, the national team's inability to qualify for World Cup tournaments.

Sheilas, Wogs and Poofers might provide readers with some, more or less, interesting facts about Australian soccer. However, it fails to provide any analysis or insights into why the beautiful game is such a basket case in Australia. It has not addressed concerns, which were apparently flagged in the introduction. Other than for recommending the appointment of a national technical director – how will this overcome administrative incompetence or things worse? – Warren has not delved into various issues associated with the 'successful' operation and management of a professional team sport. His concerns lay elsewhere.

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Note

- 1 Report by the Hon. D.G. Stewart, Published by the Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee, 10 January 1995, Parliament House, Canberra; *Soccer*, Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee, first Report, June 1995, Parliament House, Canberra; and *Soccer*, Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee, first Report, November 1995, Parliament House, Canberra.